"D.Do not . . stop me . . ." Luella begged. "I . . I have to . . go away!"

"Go away? But why?"

She wanted to explain, but suddenly it was impossible for her to speak. She could only try to control the tears that threatened to pour down her cheeks.

Gently he took the suitcase from her and putting his arm around her he said: "I have been sitting here thinking about you. Now, come and sit down and tell me what all this is about."

Luella saw a wooden seat under the trees as he drew her towards it. She sat down, pulling her hat from her head, and put her hand to her forehead.

"You said you had a headache," the Duke remarked quietly, "but I thought you were just being wise and avoiding the voluble Mrs Alcombe! How could you be so unkind as to run away from me?"

"I . . I have to . . go!" Luella stammered.

"But why? Why?"

The Duke obviously demanded an answer, and after what seemed a long pause Luella said: "Y.you . . have to be . . married to somebody whom . . the Queen has . . chosen for you."

"So that is why you are leaving me!" the Duke exclaimed. "My darling, do you really think I could marry anyone but you?" His voice deepened as he spoke and he put his arms round her. Before she could prevent it, his lips held hers captive. He kissed her possessively and passionately, as if he was afraid she might have left him.

Only when they were both breathless did he raise his head to say: "Now tell me you love me!"

"I . . I love you! I . . love you!" Luella said. "But . . because I . . love you . . I cannot . . hurt you."

"You could hurt me only if you left me," the Duke said. "I have never before been in love as I love you, my precious, and if I lost you I would not wish to go on living."

"You must . . not say that . . you must . . not!" Luella cried. "And . . even if you do not . . obey the Queen . . you cannot . . m.marry me."

She could see the Duke in the moonlight staring at her in astonishment before he asked: "What are you saying?"

"It would . . hurt you in your . . position if you . . married me."

"That is absolute nonsense!" the Duke said. "Your father was respected as a writer, and we will make him even better known. And anyone who sees you, my beautiful one, will understand why I wanted to marry you."

"It is . . not only that," Luella whispered, "you . . must not . . marry me . . it is impossible for you to do so."

The Duke pulled her closer to him. "I may be very stupid," he said, "but you will have to explain to me why you feel like this."

"Papa always said . . that I was to . . tell no one," Luella replied. "But he thought that if I . . married someone . . ordinary . . it would . . not matter." She gave a little sob before she went on: "But . . but you are . . not ordinary . . you are *extra*ordinary . . and very important . . and I . . I could not . . spoil your l.life."